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THE NEW JESUS MYTH AND ITS ETHICAL
VALUE.

NATHANIEL SCHMIDT.

GERMANY is experiencing a fresh religious sensation. Compared with it the Babel-Bible storm was but a gentle breeze. It has spread from place to place, aroused an incredible amount of excitement, and appears to be far from having exhausted its strength. There is probably no other country where it would be possible to stir the minds of scholars and common folk alike to such a degree by a religious problem. But the conditions apparently require that the moving force shall not be clerical. The German mind responds very quickly to a discussion of vital questions that gives the impression of being free from prejudice, is frank, earnest, and courageous, and seeks to go to the roots of things. But with all its respect for the authority of the specialist, it is inclined to be distrustful of the theologian *ex professo*. The unnatural relation of church and state is in part responsible for this, in part the apologetic attitude of the sectarian, whether his sect be great or small. Christianity is the official religion of the empire, supported at public expense. Not only the pulpit orator, but also the theological professor at the university, is expected to be a Christian of a definite type, and in spite of the prevalent freedom of academic teaching is in wide circles held to be in honor bound to defend the religion of the state. Hence even the greatest erudition, the most valuable services to science, and the most liberal tendencies of thought cannot quite free him from a suspicion of intellectual disingenuousness that, as a rule, is wholly unjustifiable.

The theologian who is simply a trained student and a competent interpreter of the religious phenomena of man's life, without any necessary ecclesiastical affiliation,

is almost unknown in Germany. Many an eminent contributor to the science of religion, therefore, prefers to be known as a philologist, historian, or philosopher; and the multitudes estranged from the creed and cult of the church, are apt to listen to the theological opinions of a man accustomed to scientific investigations, though less thoroughly at home in the realm of theology, with greater confidence than to a theologian who, with superior training, ampler resources, and a surer method, may be suspected of prepossessions due to life-long habits of thought and the restrictions of his calling. Nor is this popular instinct altogether wrong. Theology owes a heavy debt to the coöperation of scholars reaching over from their various specialties into its peculiar field. An intimate acquaintance with some branch of science is by no means a guarantee of capacity to take broad surveys, occupy new view-points, and make valid generalizations. It is quite possible to be a distinguished specialist in the Old Testament or the New, and yet to be nothing but a diletant in comparative mythology.

The agents of religious unrest in the present case are laymen. Most prominent among them is Professor Arthur Drews. He holds the chair of philosophy in the Technische Hochschule at Karlsruhe. Rightly or wrongly, that raises a presumption in favor of untrammelled search after truth and freedom from undue theological bias. Yet he writes with the fervor and fierceness of a prophet, and cannot be regarded as an enemy of religion. For he is an ardent advocate of a religious monism, a mystic pantheism, that is strongly opposed to the current materialistic monism of Haeckel. He is the author of a work entitled "Religion as the Self-consciousness of God," and though hostile to the Christian church, and particularly to liberal Protestantism, cherishes large hopes for a Christianity freed from any relation to Jesus as a human personality. He is the apostle of the movement, the preacher of the faith, whose theses, public disputations with the theologians, addresses be-

fore vast audiences, and popularly written works have left the deepest impression. Without him no sensation is likely to have been created. His book "The Christ-Myth," which passed through several editions in 1910, sums up, in a comprehensive manner, the construction of history that has caused so much discussion. It affirms that Jesus of Nazareth never existed, accounts for the origin and growth of Christianity, including the contents of the gospels, by the general religious development of the period, looks upon the Christian church as a Gnostic sect, and declares that Jesus was a deity worshiped before the Christian era.

These positions were promptly attacked by the theologians who had been challenged, and a considerable number of brochures and articles have appeared in quick succession during the last twelvemonth. Professors Von Soden, Bornemann, Johannes Weiss, Hauck, Beth, Dunkmann, Juelicher, Weinel, Windisch, Zimmern, and others, have undertaken to vindicate from different points of view, the historical character of the Galilean prophet. Many of these studies have been of decided value by broadening the outlook and emphasizing the need of stricter methods on all sides. But Professor Drews complains, not without cause, of the tone assumed by some of his critics. Unfortunately, it has to some extent affected his own. Even his species of *odium theologicum* grows by what it feeds on; and there are many who like the din and fray of battle, the defiant challenge, the onslaught on the enemy, and the shout of victory. Schweizer remarks that "a life of Jesus can be written even in hatred, and the greatest have been written in hatred, those of Reimarus and David Friedrich Strauss" ("Von Reimarus zu Wrede," p. 4). This is scarcely true of Strauss, and of course wholly inapplicable to Renan and Keim, Albert Réville, and Wrede. The attitude of men in this respect has undergone a marked change. An increasing number of thoughtful and independent people think it proper that historical questions should be settled

by calm, patient, painstaking and disinterested investigations, that religious problems should be discussed with reverence, delicacy, and a touch of genuine sympathy, and that a Life of Jesus, if it is deemed possible to construct one, should be written *con amore*. If a more excellent way has been found than that which many have been induced to follow by the example of the gentle Nazarene, it would commend itself by casting out the bellicose, self-satisfied and disdainful spirit that has too often disgraced the discussions of these serious questions.

Professor Drews had his precursors, and he has his followers. He rightly calls attention to the services rendered by such early mythologists as Dupuis, Volney, and Nork. Pioneer work is not as easy as repetition. In all fairness, however, he should also have given credit to the liberal theologians for the excellent use they have made of most of the mythical material on which he relies in elucidating the ideas and practices of early Christianity. It is largely their merit that it is not necessary to-day to prove the ultimate ethnic origin of some of the formative ideas of the first ecumenic creed, with its emphasis on the divine paternity and the virgin birth, the death and the resurrection, the descent to hell and the ascent to heaven. They long ago recognized that not only the dogma, ritual, and polity of the fully developed Catholic church, but also the most characteristic Christian conceptions and customs found in the New Testament, naturally developed from previously existing Jewish and pagan thought and usage. The indebtedness to Bruno Bauer is freely acknowledged. This subtle and profound thinker was almost the first to perceive the genetic connection between Christianity and the Hellenistic world of thought in which it grew up. It is not necessary to adopt his conclusions in order to recognize the duty of seriously considering his arguments and the value of placing oneself at his point of view. The attitude of such Dutch theologians as Pierson, Loman, Meyboom, and Van Manen does not seem to have been observed by Professor Drews.

There can be no doubt that he has been much influenced by A. Kalthoff's attempt to understand Christianity as an expression of a peculiar social rather than individual consciousness, the aspiration and upward movement of the Jewish slave proletariat in Rome, and not unmoved by the endeavor of Professor Peter Jensen, the distinguished Assyriologist of Strasburg, to prove that Moses, Jesus, and Paul are three variants of the Babylonian god-man Gilgamesh, as well as by that of the late Professor Karl Vollers, of Jena, another eminent Orientalist, to explain the relation of Christianity to the other great religions without the assumption of an historical founder. His most important teachers, however, were Mr. John M. Robertson, member of the British Parliament, and Professor William Benjamin Smith, of Tulane University. In a series of works, marked by wide reading, a broad outlook, an earnest purpose, and a courteous manner, rather than by a critical mastery of the material, Mr. Robertson expressed his conviction that Christianity is to be interpreted as a crystallization of mythical conceptions in a Gnostic sect, having nothing to do with Jesus of Nazareth. But the most startling and to his mind apparently most significant idea Professor Drews owes to the American scholar.

Professor Smith is a noted mathematician, the author of many works on geometry and calculus; for a number of years he taught physics, and in 1906 he was transferred from the chair of mathematics to that of philosophy in the foremost university of the South. Theology has been his avocation for a long number of years, and his familiarity with New Testament criticism is such as to inspire even specialists with sincere respect. He possesses a mind of unusual keenness and versatility, subtle, penetrating, and resourceful, as nimble in treading new paths, as it is assiduous in defending every step taken. It is not easy to conceive of his ever abandoning a position once occupied; this innovator is a consummate apologist. Withal he has a playful, if somewhat caustic, humor, is the master

of a brilliant style, and takes a manifest delight in the conflict. In 1906 five essays of his were translated into German by Pastor Lehmpfuhl and published under the title "Der vorchristliche Jesus." A just, appreciative, and discriminating preface by Professor Schmiedel helped to give the book the attention it deserved. In this work Professor Smith announced his discovery of Jesus as a pre-Christian deity. He had found the evidence chiefly in four places, *viz.*, a passage in Epiphanius (d. 403 A.D.), a formula of conjuration in a Paris papyrus of the fourth century, the Naasene hymn in Hippolytus (d. after 235 A. D.), and the phrase "the things concerning Jesus" in Acts 18:24-28. A new collection of essays has been translated into German, probably by the same excellent hand, and sent out in 1911 under the title "Ecce Deus."

Among the other leaders of the movement, F. Steudel and S. Lublinski deserve special mention. In his pamphlet "Zum Kampf um die Christusmythe," the former shows himself possessed of much critical acumen, moderation, and insight. Lublinski, who recently passed away, was a literary critic, philosopher, and poet of considerable power, and his two volumes on "Der urchristliche Erdkreis und sein Mythos," which assume the correctness of the views of Smith and Drews, are as reverent in spirit as they are beautiful in style, and will help to pave the way for a cheerful acceptance of what is true in the contentions of this group of scholars. Nor should it be overlooked that Professor Cheyne, of Oxford, the famous Hebraist and editor of the *Encyclopædia Biblica*, has given at least a qualified approval to the theory of a pre-Christian Jesus cult, holding that "the god-man, whose cult in certain Jewish circles was probably pre-Christian, was called by a name which underlies Jeshua" (*Hibbert Journal*, July, 1911, p. 891).

It is worth while inquiring,—even if it does not seem possible to attach as much significance to the question as some of these scholars do,—what weight can be given by disinterested historical research to the evidence that has

been adduced to prove the existence of the worship in Jewish circles of a god Jesus before our era. Professor Smith was unquestionably right in passing by without comment the suggestion of Mr. Robertson, adopted by Professor Drews, that Joshua, the son of Nun, and Joshua, the high-priest in the time of Darius Hystaspes, were the objects of divine worship. Professor Cheyne has not yet made known what name, in his judgment, underlies that of Jeshua, or what indications he has found of the cult of the god-man in the Judaism of pre-Christian times. Professor Smith assigns much importance to the description of the Nazoræans by Epiphanius. According to this church father, the Nazoræans were a Jewish-Christian sect living "in Beroea, about Coele-Syria, and in Decapolis, about the regions of Pella, and in Basanitis that is called Kokabe," who were formerly known as Jessæans, either from Jesse or from Jesus, and were identical with the Essenes. He also mentions a Jewish sect, the Nasaræans, living in "Gaaladitis, Basinitis and the region beyond the Jordan," which existed before Christ and did not know Christ, and differed from other Jews only in regarding the law of Moses they possessed as more accurate, refusing to offer sacrifices, and abstaining from animal food. Now Professor Smith assumes that Epiphanius made a distinction where there was no difference, that the Nazoræans existed before Christ and were then called Jessæans because they worshiped a god named Jesus, and that the term Nazoræans has nothing to do with the town of Nazareth, which did not exist in the first century, but is derived from an epithet of Jesus designating him as a divinity who "protects."

But there seems to be no good reason for assuming such a confusion on the part of Epiphanius. If he can be trusted in his statement that the Nasaræans existed before Christ, which is perfectly natural in the case of a Jewish sect, why should his accuracy be questioned when he distinguishes them from the Christian Nazoræans, or the significant addition be overlooked that the

former did not recognize Christ? The recently discovered documents relating to the covenanters of Damascus, published by Dr. Schechter, come from one of the Jewish sects that flourished in the region beyond the Jordan, and help us to understand the attitude of the Nasaræans, and possibly also that of the Jessæans. Those who entered into the new covenant and took up their abode in Damascus and the neighboring region about the middle of the second century B. C., after the overthrow of the old high-priestly family, departed so widely from the Pharisees on important points of interpretation and practice as easily to suggest that they had a different law, refused to enter the temple to kindle the altar-fire and offer sacrifice, and looked for a Messiah, not of the seed of David and the tribe of Judah, but of Aaron and Israel. The kinship to the Nasaræans of Epiphanius is unmistakable, even if the Damascene dissenters were not vegetarians. If their Peræan neighbors before they embraced Christianity, by way of protest against an Aaronid and Israelite Messiah, emphasized the Davidic descent of the coming deliverer, they may well for this reason have called themselves Jessæans, after Jesse, the father of David. The most probable meaning of Nazoræans is Galileans. The plain is called Genesar or Genosar, the Galilean lowland; the district immediately west of the lake is named Gennesar or the Galilean garden; the lake itself is designated as the water of Gennesar. In the Talmud, Jesus is called *ha-nozri* and his followers *ha-nozrim*, and in the New Testament the corresponding terms Nazoræan and Nazoræans or Nazorenes are used, indicating, no doubt, that they were Galileans, or natives of that part of Galilee which was particularly famous for its luxuriant vegetation. It should not have been necessary for Professor Cheyne to point out that, in Hebrew, "the Guardian" would be *ha-nozer*, not *ha-nozri*. But though *ha-nozri* probably designates Jesus as "the Galilean," not as a native of Nazareth, it is not strange that there should have been a Galilean town by that name. It does not happen to be mentioned by

Josephus or in the Talmud; but Eusebius knew it, the evangelists obviously believed in its existence, and it is hard to understand why any one should have invented such a place-name. A pre-Christian god Jesus cannot be proved from Epiphanius.

Whether the Naasenes, or Ophites, existed before the appearance of Christianity in the world or not, they are likely to have been a religious society before they became Christians. It is certain, however, that for a long time they were a Christian Gnostic sect. The occurrence of the name Jesus in an undated Naasene hymn quoted by Hippolytus (*Philosophumena*, v. 1) cannot, therefore, be adduced as evidence. Before it can be used, it will be necessary to show that in its present form it antedates the contact of the sect with Christianity.

More puzzling is the formula: "I conjure thee by the god of the Hebrews, Jesus," found in the great Paris papyrus published by Dr. C. Wessely in the *Denkschriften d. k. Akademie d. Wissenschaften*, Wien, 1888. This papyrus, in the judgment of the editor, comes from the early part of the fourth century, but contains much older material, the sources being sometimes quoted, sometimes not. The ancient collector to whom we owe its present form was a pagan, living in Egypt, probably in Alexandria, and gathering from every quarter prayers to the gods, Hermetic revelations, magic formulas, charms, and incantations. In ll. 3007-3085 he quoted a 'Hebrew formula,' preserved "among pure men," particularly useful in the case of those possessed by the demon Pibechus. The late Dr. Albrecht Dietrich thought that these 'pure men' were the Therapeutæ on Lake Mareotis described by Philo, and that "the main part" of the charm ultimately came from them through the Ophites to the author of the papyrus (*Abraxas*, 1891, p. 143). However that may be, it is certain that it has been copied more than once, and that it teems with errors of transcription. The hand that wrote 'Osrael' for 'Israel,' and made the three demons 'Ebusæus,' 'Chersæus,' and

'Pharisæus' out of the 'Jebusite,' 'the Girgashite,' and 'the Perizzite,' should not be too implicitly trusted when attempting to copy the names of the god of the Hebrews. 'Jesu' may very well be a blunder of the copyist for 'Jeu,' the divine name in the Gnostic works Pistis Sophia and The Books of Jeu, and is apparently followed by 'Yahwe,' 'Father of living spirits,' 'El Elohe,' and other titles. The pagan copyist may even have ignorantly imagined Jesus to have been a name of the god of the Hebrews; in ll. 1231 ff. he records a Coptic formula: "Hail spirits of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Jesus Christ, the Holy Ghost, the Son of the Father (who is) above Isasphe or Isasphiena (Joseph?), Iao Sabaoth, let your strength mock at this until ye have cast out this impure demon Sadan." It would be hazardous indeed to base an argument upon the accuracy of this late pagan scribe.

It certainly cannot be looked upon as incredible that Apollos should have heard some of the things concerning the historic Jesus, and himself taught, without knowing any other baptism than that of John. The synoptic Jesus himself knows no other baptism, the present form of Matt. 28:19f. being of very late origin; and Apollos may have heard in Alexandria very much concerning Jesus of Nazareth without any word reaching him as regards a distinct water-baptism in the name of Jesus, or a spirit-baptism giving special powers. There were evidently many different types of teaching attaching themselves to the names of John and Jesus among the Jews of the dispersion before Paul appeared with his gospel. We do not know what Apollos preached concerning Jesus before he came under the influence of Aquila and Priscilla, not even whether at that time he regarded him as the Messiah. It is perfectly gratuitous to assert, as Professor Smith does, that "he knew nothing about the teacher, his life, his personality, his death, his resurrection and ascension, for if he knew anything of this, he must have known all." Why must he? Is it so necessary to picture Apollos as learning his doctrines through

gospels and catechisms, so impossible to conceive of news concerning a prophet traveling in the East without the completeness of a full biography or the redundancy of every type of legendary embellishment, that the only alternative is to think of Apollos as a missionary, proclaiming, before he became a Christian, a certain god Jesus never mentioned in a pre-Christian document? Nothing necessitates, or commends, the interpretation of 'Elymas bar Jesus' as 'Elymas, worshiper of the god Jesus' rather than 'Elymas, son of Jesus.' Jesus was a common name among the Jews; it was borne by several persons in the Old Testament; Jesus ben Eleazar ben Sira was a well known author; Jesus bar Abba was the murderer released in preference to Jesus of Nazareth; Jesus, called Justus, is mentioned in Col. 4:11; Elymas bar Jeshu is as natural as Simeon ben Jeshua in Ecclus 50:27; 51:30 twice (Heb.), probably the author of The Ode of Famous Men.

Professor Smith seems to have succeeded only in building up a new Jesus myth. He has painted before our eyes a hitherto unknown divinity, with colors borrowed from pagan and Christian myths. But he has not shown us a shrine, a priest, a worshiper, an oracle, or the slightest trace of the presence of this god in the minds of men. Nor is his case strengthened by the statement of Professor Drews that there existed "a syncretistic religious system, composed of Babylonian, Persian, Jewish, and Greek ingredients, which ruled the whole of western Asia in the last centuries before Christ, and whose followers called themselves Adonaei, after the name of its supposed founder, Ado," that Christianity was only a Gnostic sect, and that Jesus of Nazareth never existed.

In regard to the Adonaei, this name was unknown until Pognon some time ago published a Syriac work by Theodore bar Choni, written possibly as early as the sixth century. Speaking of the Mandæans, he says that they may also be called Adonaei after their founder Ado. In their own sacred books, the Genza, the Qolasta, and oth-

ers, they only call themselves Mandæans, or Gnostics, and no such person as Ado is mentioned. They, or some kindred sect, were known to Muhammed as Sabians, or Baptists. Like Elkesai who flourished in the time of Trajan, Ado may have been the founder of a similar sect, and Theodore may have confused it with the Mandæans. There certainly is not the slightest evidence that either Mandæans or Adonaei existed "in the centuries before Christ" as followers of a syncretistic religious system ruling the whole of Western Asia. We know of no Mandæans outside of Babylonia, and have no documents that could possibly be assigned to a higher age than the third century A. D., and positively no means as yet of dating the earlier material that may have been incorporated in our oldest texts.

Gnosticism was once regarded as nothing else than a Christian heresy. That was a mistake. While all the great Gnostic systems known to us came from Christian Gnostics, and all the eminent Gnostics, men like Valentinus, Basilides, and Marcion, were ardent Christians, the tendencies of thought that prepared the way for them had unquestionably been in the world for a long time. Whether Mandaism existed as an organized cult-community before Christianity or not, it no doubt existed before it came in contact with either Judaism or Christianity, and it always remained essentially pagan. Unfortunately we do not know at present when this sect first appeared, and we are likewise unable to say whether the Naasenes existed as a sect in the first century A. D. Yet though we have no definite information as to any Gnostic system of that century, the reputed Gnostics of the period, Simon of Gitta, Menander of Kapparetæa, and Cerinthus of Alexandria, are tantalizingly elusive personalities and all connected by tradition with Christianity, and references to Cainites, Nicolaitans, and the like are very vague, there seems to be enough ground for supposing that Gnosticism existed, and we may conjecture at least what the early stages must have been. But there is absolutely

no warrant to look upon the Christianity of Paul and the synoptic gospels as a sect, or branch of an organized Gnostic church, and we must carefully avoid the current error that Gnosticism had only one root. Originally distinct products of life and thought in the Hellenistic age, they met, and Gnosticism received from Christianity that which gave to it its greatest importance, and in its turn transmitted to Christianity much that was of real value.

That Jesus of Nazareth never existed is the thesis defended most strenuously by Professors Smith and Drews. This is, of course, a purely historical question to be decided by evidence carefully sifted and accurately weighed. It has been considered more or less earnestly in all recent attempts at presenting a biography of Jesus. Naturally the attention has first turned to Jewish and pagan literature. That the passage in our present text of Josephus is a Christian interpolation cannot be doubted. There is room for a suspicion that it took the place of something the Christian copyist did not care to preserve, characterizing the appearance of Jesus as another calamity to Israel, but the suspicion is not capable of verification. The references in the Talmud all depend on the gospels or on invention. Seneca's silence has a tendency to show that Rome cannot have been much stirred in the days of Nero by the new Oriental faith. No argument of weight, based either on style or subject-matter, can be adduced against the Tacitean authorship of the chapter in the *Annals* dealing with the Neronian persecution; but there is good reason for questioning the historic accuracy of the account. If we had no other sources than the material drawn from pagan or Jewish authors, it would be quite impossible for an historian to affirm that Jesus of Nazareth had ever lived.

But the contention that all Christian testimony may without ceremony be waived out of court does not appear reasonable. It has often been said that Islam is the only religion born in the broad daylight of history. Yet it may well be asked what we would know concerning Mu-

ammed's life or the origin of his religious reform, if all Muslim testimony were barred out. All the facts accepted by the historian are vouched for by Muslims; though the historian does not accept all that early Muslim tradition presents. The fact that a man became a Muslim did not render him unfit to bear witness or to transmit a reliable tradition. Nor can a fair criticism adopt the principle that an author's Christian faith is presumptive evidence against the trustworthiness of anything he may relate. After all, it is not strange that the adherents of a new religious faith should be more interested in knowing the truth concerning its founder than the ignorant, indifferent, or hostile world outside. It may not be easy, however, for a believer to gratify this desire for truth. His sources may be scanty or flow too copiously; he may accept what he hears without discrimination and transmit without accuracy; his lack of critical judgment may be equaled by his imagination; his habits of thought may force him to see things in a wrong perspective; his historic appreciation may be affected by his own ideal and his vision of reality by his love of speculation. Add to this the difficulty of a later generation in recovering his words through differing codices and varying versions, and the duty of a searching criticism must be seen to be imperative.

It is universally admitted that the Fourth Gospel is later than the synoptics and depends upon them. Its peculiarities are such that critical students generally abstain from using it as an historical source, while recognizing its spiritual value. Even if the recent studies of Schwartz and Wellhausen should render it probable that the author had before him a document akin to Mark, containing some historically important material, though already affected by the 'Johannine' style, this judgment would not be essentially changed. Textual criticism has conclusively shown that the present text of the synoptics differs to a considerable extent from the original Greek form. But after the additions have all been removed,

Luke still appears to be the latest of these three gospels, and is so regarded by most scholars. There is a difference of opinion as to whether priority should be assigned to Mark or the source of Matthew and whether this source was a mere collection of sayings or a combination of words with narratives, such as primitive Matthew probably was; but there seems to be absolute agreement in regard to the general progress from Matthew-Mark to Luke, and from Luke to John. This is of some importance; for if the theory of Professors Smith and Drews were correct, one would expect a gospel like that of John first, and then, as the process of humanizing the divinity advanced, Luke, and last Matthew-Mark.

The transliteration into Greek, in our earliest gospels, of Aramaic words put upon the lips of Jesus naturally suggests that all his sayings have been translated into Greek from what must have been his vernacular, if he was a Galilean Jew. It is a manifest duty of the student of the gospels to test every alleged utterance of Jesus in the form it is likely to have had in the Galilean dialect of the Aramaic. In the case of characteristic words, expressions, and brief sayings this can be done with a close approach to certainty. Thus, to quote an especially significant instance, the Greek term translated 'The Son of Man' can only be a translation of the Aramaic *bar nasha* which always designates 'man,' and cannot possibly have been a Messianic title. When this generic meaning of the Aramaic word used in the original is borne in mind, the saying: "Man was not made for the sake of the sabbath, but the sabbath was made for the sake of man; therefore man (*bar nasha*) is also lord of the sabbath," is not only seen to have a sense and cogency it never possessed when supposed to refer to the authority of the Messiah, but also suggests the astonishingly radical and far-reaching idea that man has authority over the institutions created for his good. The same holds true of other sayings. With the disappearance of this supposed self-designation, the only plausible reason is removed for

imagining that the man whose Aramaic words, weighty with strikingly original thought, lie behind our Greek texts, looked upon himself as the Messiah, or wished to become the Messiah, or hoped that he would after death gain the position of the Messiah. The importance of this line of reasoning was already set forth by the present writer fifteen years ago, but most fully in his book "The Prophet of Nazareth" (2d ed., 1907).

Even in some circles where the necessity of going behind the Greek to the vernacular of the Galilean teacher is not yet realized, the feeling prevails that our synoptic gospels are a sort of palimpsest, showing beneath the upper text the traces of an older hand. This feeling led Professor Schmiedel to lay down his nine 'foundation-pillars.' They are passages so out of harmony with the general conceptions of Jesus, manifestly held by the evangelists, as to preclude the possibility of their having been invented by them. The genuineness of some of these sayings may be questioned without affecting the force of the others. Professor Smith has tried, in his last book, ("Ecce Deus," 1911), to invalidate their strength by the observation that the evangelists would not have recorded words indicating ignorance or other limitations on the part of Jesus, if they had considered them inconsistent with the character they ascribed to him. But it must be admitted that it is far easier to believe that they preserved these things because they were too strongly entrenched in tradition to be left out and they were able to square them in some way with their dominant ideas, than that they deliberately introduced these features in an imaginary life on earth of the divine personality whom they worshiped. Too much importance, however, is assigned to these 'foundation-pillars,' when the whole structure is made to rest on them. They are valuable because they point to some phases of an early tradition in which Jesus had not yet been raised above the level of humanity. The evidence, furnished by a resort to the original Aramaic, that in this early tradition Jesus did not regard or pro-

claim himself as the Messiah is at least of equal worth, and the peculiar style of teaching characteristic of this early stratum of tradition likewise tends to strengthen the impression of historic probability.

Parables bearing a certain resemblance to those ascribed to Jesus have been found in Midrashic and Talmudic literature. But they cannot be proved to be earlier than his time; they are scattered in heaps of material of an entirely different nature; they seldom have the same simplicity, artistic beauty, and pointedness of thought. The most perfect parables and the most striking apothegms in the synoptic gospels do not give the impression of being culled from books, but of coming from a rich and fertile mind, more familiar with nature and human life than with literature, and more concerned about the fundamental questions of right and love than with formulas, ceremonies, celestial mysteries, or a scheme of salvation. In view of the beatitudes found in the *Slavonic Enoch*, it cannot be said to be impossible for an unknown writer to place upon the lips of a hero who never existed thoughts of unusual significance. But it is certainly easier to understand the marked difference between parables and sayings that may be assigned to the earlier tradition and the expansions and additions that manifestly represent a later time by supposing that the former come from one original teacher than on the theory that all is either the work of the evangelists themselves or a florilegium from Jewish and Gnostic sources. The original Aramaic gospel is lost. Whether a copy of it still exists on the earth or under the surface of the earth, we cannot tell. Through our Greek gospels and other sources we may be able to catch glimpses here and there of its contents; but it can only be conjecturally restored. It is permissible to believe that the material allows us to trace, though it be in barest outline, a tradition that antedates the fall of Jerusalem and even the appearance of Paul.

How far the Pauline letters can be used as evidence of the existence of Jesus as a man, is not easily de-

terminated. Even if five of the epistles be regarded as genuine, though with many interpolations, on grounds that seem substantial, and the lack of personal acquaintance with Jesus is urged, the silence concerning every event in the life of Jesus, save the closing tragedy, and concerning every word uttered by him, save the eucharistic formula for which a special revelation is claimed, is, to say the least, very strange. It can be understood, in a measure, by the paramount interest in the death and the resurrection of Jesus, the inner revolution caused by the acceptance of a crucified Messiah and the apparent corollary, the abrogation of the law, the new turn of speculation, and the absorbing concerns of practical missionary work. It may be pointed out, not without force, that the great ecumenic creeds are likewise silent concerning the life and teaching of Jesus, though of course their framers were perfectly familiar with the gospel story. There seem to be insurmountable obstacles to the supposition that Paul proclaimed the death and resurrection of a god who had never lived as a man on earth. Regularly recurring cosmic events symbolized in the experience of a deity may excite the worshiper to self-inflicted suffering and ecstatic joy in imitation and fellowship, but are not likely to produce the burning sense of shame, of national guilt, and of danger to the ancient legislation, so manifestly connected with Paul's thought of the cross. This attitude, peculiar as it is, can be better comprehended, at any rate, if a man had actually been crucified, or impaled, by the Jewish authorities, in obedience, as they thought, to the law of Moses, but whom, for some reason, Paul came to regard as the true Messiah. It should be observed also, that Paul does not seem to have looked upon Jesus as a god, or the one God appearing in human form, but as the archetypal, celestial man, the Messiah existing before his birth and after his death, but always inferior to God, the divine name never being applied to him; and that there is not the slightest evidence in pre-Christian literature of a suffering Mes-

siah, not to speak of a crucified and risen Christ. It remains most probable that before the middle of the first century Paul heard of the Galilean prophet who had been put to death in Jerusalem and believed him to be the Messiah. Yet the still unsolved problems in connection with the Pauline literature are so great that it is not wise to insist. The balance of probability appears to the present writer to be very strongly in favor of the historic existence of a prophet by the name of Jesus living in Galilee and dying in Jerusalem in the first half of the first century A. D., while he can find no testimony that even plausibly suggests the existence of a god named Jesus worshiped in Jewish-Gnostic circles before our common era.

But this endeavor to eliminate Jesus, the man, and to prove the existence of Jesus, the pre-Christian god, has an ulterior object. Especially in the case of Professor Drews it is evidently undertaken for the purpose of removing what seem serious stumbling-blocks in the way of sound religious faith and genuine moral integrity. "The chief obstacle," he says, "to a monistic religion and attitude is the belief, irreconcilable with reason and history, in the historical reality of a unique ideal and unsurpassable redeemer." He wishes to persuade men to turn away from a human personality with whom they are too apt to associate the highest ideal of moral perfection and the final authority in the realm of religious thought, to "transfer the sinking fire of religion to the ground of pantheism," and to recognize "the real Christian doctrine of redemption" which he describes in these terms: "To think of the world's activity as God's activity, of mankind's development, filled with struggles and suffering, as the story of a divine struggle and passion, of the world-process as the process of a god who in each individual creature fights, suffers, conquers and dies so that he may overcome the limitations of the finite in the religious consciousness of man and anticipate his future triumph over all the suffering of the world."

It may be seriously questioned whether this pantheistic Christianity without Jesus would serve the world's religious needs better than the ideas and ideals, the aspirations and efforts, the inspiration and example of the prophet of Nazareth. It is not much that we know of 'the living universe' beyond the bounds of our own little planet. The impression of grandeur and beauty, of immutable order and marvelous adjustment, is indeed of great worth. But the things that appeal most strongly to our moral nature, making us most dissatisfied with our ignorance, sinfulness, and unavailing efforts, and most eager in the pursuit of truth, righteousness, and harmony, are not to be found among the stars. They are seen pre-eminently in human life, in the history of the race and the individual. Whatever value the story of the gods possessed was due to the human qualities with which they were imbued. They were made in man's image, and the more truly they reflected what was noblest in that image, the more beneficent was their influence. The same is true of the mediators. Just in proportion as the Christ of the church was clothed with the best human qualities men's thirst after the ideal could conceive, worship and imitation had an intrinsic moral worth. Our idealizations of historic personalities are not without their value. Every man who helps to free us from the bondage of ignorance and unrighteousness, to purify, strengthen, and enrich our moral life, is a redeemer. If we are held by a theory that allows him no imperfections, the discovery of certain limitations may have a tendency to diminish his influence for good over us.

Professor Drews is right in maintaining that the conception of prophetic infallibility is a check to healthy moral and religious growth. But, precisely in this respect, the liberal theologians, Catholics as well as Protestants, have rendered a very great service. They have gently removed the robes of impeccability and revealed a humanity "of like passions with ourselves," subject to the same experiences from the cradle to the grave, and

the same limitations of birth, environment, and subjective traits; yet they have also eagerly and reverently sought to disengage the elements of permanent spiritual value from what is perishable in the life-work of even the best of men. Before a judgment that combines true docility with fearless inquiry the danger disappears. The normal thing for a human being is to admire what seems worthy of praise, to learn, imitate, and emulate, without denying, glossing over, exaggerating, or apologizing for what appears less commendable. In this spirit generations to come will, no doubt, ask what manner of man Jesus of Nazareth was, and what helpful lessons may be drawn from his life and teaching, when all interest shall have ceased in the question whether he was a god or a man, or in the effort to improve morality by removing his inspiring personality from the realm of history.

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THE PROBLEM OF DESTITUTION: A PLEA FOR THE MINORITY REPORT.

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THE debate as to the comparative merits of the two Reports of the Poor Law Commission is sometimes deprecated on the ground that the agreement between them is so extensive that the wise course would be to unite in a single concerted effort for legislation on these common lines. It is, therefore, of the utmost importance, at the outset, to understand how far the agreement extends, and how far the differences are fundamental.

One thing seems clear. The destructive parts of both Reports are in essential agreement; it is in their constructive policies that they differ. As the Chairman of the Royal Commission has said:

So far as the review of the system and practice of the existing poor law administration is concerned, there is little difference in substance between the two reports. They practically condemn the same things, notably